

Transgression and Dissidence in Rachid Mimouni's 'Le Fleuve Détourné'



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Abstract

The paper appropriates the African Tradition combined with Ian Miller's theoretical concept of "Disgust" in order to investigate into the dissident language of Rachid Mimouni's *Le fleuve détourné* (1982). The novel was written at a time when restrictions and censorship were prominent and the writer could neither dare to indict directly the political officials nor could he risk a direct attack on the regime for the repressive conditions under which the population was engulfed. He could, however, imply such responsibility through the development of trickster paradigms to debunk and call into question the official oppressive authority. Subtlety, deviation, signifying, and indirection become his best tools. In so doing, the writer allows his characters to denounce the social and political turmoil by concerning himself with the description of the burning problems. The present paper reads *Le fleuve détourné* to show how the author resists political oppression by using the trickster's cunning, subversive, and deviating discourse, which serve to convey the horrors of corruption and misrule. As an "Intellectual Trickster" and by means of serious laughter, irony, and sarcasm, the novel reflects the incompetence, sluggishness, and absolute irresponsibility of the political officials which led to the doom of the independence era ever before it came into being and devalued its much anticipated fruits. The literary strategies or 'devices' that Mimouni draws from his local culture will be combined with Miller's notion of "disgust", and then will be applied to the novel's characters.

1. Introduction

The present article offers a new perspective to explore *Le fleuve détourné* [The Diverted River] (1982) a novel written by an Algerian prominent postcolonial author, Rachid Mimouni (1945-1995). The aim of the paper is to show how the novel's narrative becomes an arena on which the great questions of society are conducted. The debates are reflected mainly in the various discursive strategies through which the author challenges the political authority and questions its official discourses. The writer deploys textual "outbreaks" that erupt in vehement but subtle denunciations to provide a vision of a society that emerged from cruel times of colonialism to be engulfed in neocolonialism. He appeals to verbal indirection and signifying oratory as deviation tactics to revise his culture. The devices are drawn from the African verbal expression of implicit meaning akin to the African trickster tradition and are uttered in a revolting mode of writing where satire and character type becomes the appropriate mode for social criticism. Mimouni expresses his dissident thoughts in a distinctive artistic way through the manner he shapes his characters. One of the reasons, it seems to me, that the trickster folk tradition and Ian Miller's notion of 'Disgust' may be of great help to expand the understanding of what the role of a writer stands for, is my belief that Mimouni's bleak descriptions are not the result of his own pessimism, as some critics suggested, but rather the outcome of his reflections and dissident stance, which epitomizes the role of the 'Intellectual Trickster' whose role is to clarify the problems of his society, to make the sometimes opaque manipulations of power and prestige a little more transparent. Through a close reading of the text, we shall draw parallels between the novel's discursive techniques and William J. Hynes and W.G. Doty's idea of a "Trickster figure" that they discuss in a book entitled, *Mythical Trickster Figures. Contours, Contexts, and Criticism* (1993). The purpose is to show the extent to which the novel follows the African trickster tradition of the hero who baffles his interpreters and his adversaries because he embodies a purposefully ambivalent language in shaping culture by using wit as a means to contest irrational authority in a rebellious way and with a kind of moral integrity which is not readily apparent on the surface (Doty. 1993: 123).

In exposing, the repressive non-egalitarian and undemocratic role of the political leaders, Mimouni brings forth the evaporation of all dreams of greatness, nationalism, and liberation from the colonial yoke. The author's literary stance can be interpreted as a reaction against euphoric political discourses, as a critique of the national condition, and a subversion of the official ideologies. His novel reverberates with laughter where one would

normally expect awe and silence; the outrage and indignation is primarily displayed through the abundance of alleged scatological and blasphemous scenes, by means of which the writer expresses his revolt against and opposition to the wretchedness and the chaotic world in which corruption, will to power, and contempt of official leaders replace honesty and loyalty. To foreground the view of amazement and how the vision of ‘serious laughter’ combined with ‘disgust’ run over the narrative, emphasis will be put on how the textual rhetoric strategies of ‘Signifying’, ‘demystification’, ‘polarization’, ‘reversal’ come to sight in the novel’s polyphonic voices, which can be added to the author’s use of ‘scathing imagery’ which are displayed through the distortions that the society imposes on characters.

1.1 Demystification, Subversion, and Power of Signifying

While critics have sought to establish a link between Mimouni’s *Le fleuve détourné* with the existentialist philosophy of absurd, my approach to his use of “signifying and reversal” goes beyond and differs from other critics’ analyses. Rather, it suggests that the form of reversal displayed in Mimouni’s novels resemble what Boueihhi calls ‘the power to signify’, a tool expressing a strong revolt that can productively mediate culture and politics. ‘Reversal’ is an expression of ‘resistance’ whether it is an opposition and manifestation of hostility towards authority to generate the type of consciousness susceptible to generate systematic revolutionary action (Doueihhi in Hyne.Doty.1993: 129-200).

In the universe of Mimouni’s novel, everything is a sign of something and the relationship of his narratives to reality and his concern with current and topical issues is significant. It is a representation without any epic or tragic dimensions. All the events have an immediate and even crudely familiar contact with living contemporary present and echo ideological issues of the day. The author does not rely on legends but on experience which makes the tale resemble a cynical exposé which reveals the true character of his society and uncovers the contradictions in making the strange and alienating conditions familiar. The critical aspects of the novel and its interest in the topics of the day are characteristics of the trickster folktales. According to Robert Pelton’s analysis of Akan and Ashanti folk hero Ananse, the trickster represents the human race individual and communally seizing the fragments of his experience and discovering in them an order sacred by its very wholeness. The trickster discloses the radically human character of the whole cosmos while showing the holiness of ordinary life and causing reflection upon the boundaries, upon the very nature of social order; he represents ‘metasocial commentary’ [...] the recurrent theme in trickster tales is that often taking into account all the bumbling and archaic social behaviour, the trickster contributes to the birth and evolution of culture. His role is that of a mediator and a saviour whose power comes from opposing the social structures that uphold the cultural rules (Pelton in Hynes. Doty.1993: 23-24).

1.1.1 Synopsis of the Novel

The narrative of *Le fleuve détourné* is full of astonishing, shocking, and horrific elements; all of them appear clearly in the author’s conception of characters. It confirms itself as a reservoir of potential strategies to tackle other soul-rendering dislocations; it is set primarily in a prison camp situated in the desert. Several characters such as political opponents, delinquents, depressed persons, all of them are considered subversive by the authorities and are locked up in the camp. They spend their time exchanging their despair and their fantasies. The opening chapter depicts a world of chaos which its residents passively accept both their conditions and the inevitable consequences of pain and death. But as the tale progresses, we follow the protagonist coming back to his native Douar where a mysterious epidemic disease has spread. The man cannot enter his village as entry is forbidden to foreigners. His quest leads him to an ugly and overcrowded town while looking to find his wife and son. The narrator’s relentless quest, then, merges gradually with the wounds of his country people. The town is divided into two parts: the town and the “new town”, a muddy place full of moist and mud, a sterile universe for the marginalized and the poor who live in a graveyard where the carcasses of cars and buses sink into the mud. The “New Town” is described as the reverse parody of the myth of the radiant “socialist towns” promised by the

political leaders in the euphoria of independence. During his trip, the man lives in a dust, rotting, and sterile environments; his village and the town are places where the self is threatened and dissolved. All of them are half-built and remain full of wounded or shell-shocked persons, victims of marginalization and state neglect. The alien oddness of places is juxtaposed with the man's memories of his childhood of deprivation, derisory living conditions, the non-existence of sanitary commodities, and misery. The decay is the result of a double mutilation, the effect of colonial and post-colonial injuries. The prevailing decadence that dominates the narrative events is, on the one hand, an outcome of an accelerated colonial modernization added, on the other hand to the "corrupt" post colonial spirit of the Revolution which has been betrayed by its own new leaders. The reader follows the man with broad takes of the physical landscape with close and intense portrait of victims, ranging from the man himself to the other characters who try to solicit in a place where political abuse, indifference, corruption, bureaucracy have been instituted to become a daily common currency. Their desperate attempts to escape from the rot lead all of them only to self-destruction.

However, beyond the desolate and degenerate settings, Mimouni shapes the main character as an aimless and rootless wanderer outside the pale of society. The main protagonist's depiction reminds the reader of the folktale trickster vagabond and intruder to his proper society. Christopher Vecsey, in his discussion of Ananse the Akan trickster, refers to the state of restless, the wandering aims to evaluate, explain, and reflect upon realities, thereby making them clearer and more profound to people. During his journey, the trickster breaks the patterns of a culture and helps define them. By acting irresponsibly, he helps define responsibility. He threatens, yet he teaches too. He throws doubt on realities but contributes concentrate attention on them. He abhors injustice and immorality against hardworking and defenseless people (Vecsey in Hynes. Doty. 1993: 107). Like the allegorical figures of African tales, the man travels through an absurd nightmare where old values have given way to a mentality that sets up the lies and duplicity as ubiquitous rules. He faces several violent incidents and experiences events of corrupt and lusting for power. The anonymous country is described as a "cartoonish territory" where the ruling party has spread its "web" of control that keeps the country in its grips. Sometimes, the man seems to be outside and distinct from the follies he witnesses. Either the descriptions he gives are self-betraying or the absurdities he views are mere daydreams. His story is meant to embody the spirit of Algerian freedom fighters who should assume an active role in the independent country who becomes paralyzed by hesitation and compromised by errors of judgment. He tells his story to a circle of friends who attend the prison camp in which he finds himself after killing his wife's predators. Equally baffling is the fact that his normless and amoral friends are all so completely out of touch with reality that they remove themselves each in his own way, in suicide, illness, resignation and oblivion. At the end of the narrative, when the man finds his son, the latter is corrupted by the necessity of survival; the son denies his father's paternity and stands as the representative of the new generation that remains without a future, which looks at a shining future without being able to find it. Even more astounding and monstrously aberrant is the protagonist's alienation, not only because the authorities do not listen to him, but also because even his closest family is not prepared in any way to awaken the ghosts of the past. It is better to leave them buried. For instance, Ahmed, his cousin, the Mayor of the village, talks to him in strange terms when he goes to regularize his administrative situation (P.45). His wife Houria prefers him dead because she is afraid of losing her war widow's pension. Therefore, the man should resume and keep his status as dead. He becomes so disgusted by the answers of his fellows that he is left no other option but to converse with the dead. During his efforts to find an attentive ear, he engages a discussion with Si Cherif, his Commandant during the Algerian Liberation War. The story takes a fantastic twist when the man finds that Si Cherif remembers him, understands his plight, and answers that he can do nothing for him. The bizarre is suggested by the idea that the visible world is incomprehensible and unregenerate, and that the individual is floundering in a sea of contradictions and incongruities. The entire shocking and indecorous scene stands for the author's will to present a strange world devoid of justice where the idealistic innocent suffers. The same scenes are characteristics which can be found African oral tales. The author uses an invective language to

describe the man's journey whose account begins badly, but his situation eventually becomes worse and worse. The man voices his tragedy by a foolish misjudgment: "His presence in the camp is erroneous" (P.1). However, its irony seems less obvious because the smiles it provokes are often tinged with guilt. The true nadir appears when the man is physically, mentally, and emotionally exhausted. The exasperation of the man reaches its apex when he loses his temper and feels rage when Houria tells him of her horrible adventure. A little later, full of resentment, bitterness, guilt, shame, and vengefulness, the man tries to escape the situation but then comes the death of his wife's predators who, in their wordless pathos, are pure victims of their desires, excesses, and lust. Even in their death, they remain disgusting (P.181). The man's killing of his wife's aggressors indicates that he plays the game to satisfy and revenge his wife, and in the foolishness of the moment, he feels happy at performing the heroic things that were expected all the time. But confronted by the true reality, he realizes the heavy price he has to pay for his act. By the end of the story, then, the man comes to seem less ideally human, not only physically, but also morally in his emotional and mental responses. Once more, the full dramatic effect is elaborated through a failure to meet the Administrator and recover his lost identity. The man remains asocial rejecting any participation in the events of his society, the arbitrary arrest, rampant corruption, and political abuses that have been put on show are so compulsive throughout the tale. His final position of disgust with his social environment is abject, not just because he absurdly sees himself as other than human while occupying the very body he cannot bear, but because of the position of the Administrator and his indifference. In short, the main character's story remains a wonderful adventure in questioning life, society and its ideas.

1.1.2 Polarization and Reversal Through Characters

To demystify the glorifying discourses of their countries' political leaders and denounce their revolutionary romanticism, Mimouni reflects similar trickster qualities to shape his characters. African laughter is based on transgression as a means to achieve a symbolic inversion; "a reversible world" which is defined by Barbara Babcock as any act of expressive behavior which inverts, contradicts, abrogates, or in some fashion presents an alternative to commonly held cultural codes, values and norms be they linguistic, literary, artistic, religious, social and political (Babcock [1978] cited in Stallybrass.White. 1986:17).

From this perspective, characterization in *Le fleuve détourné* resonates with points of antagonism, overlap, and intersection between high and low provide some important symbolic dissonance in culture to map parts of transgressing where body, group, identity and subjectivity interconnect. Mimouni makes his characters the mouthpieces through which discourses are pondered; the overall objective of such method is to take a cultural belief or ideology and inject it into a realistic arena of life event within a text with the purpose of allowing the reader to decide whether it is flawed, problematic, and to what extent it is deficient. Characters illuminate the discursive sites where social classification and psychological processes are generated as conflictual making ideology and fiction conjoin. They are not made only generic, but also contrasted as polarities illustrating certain social propositions. For instance, the anonymous character and his reliable friends are polarized to the Administrator and his followers. The society that Mimouni refers to is separated out into two groups: the oppressed, contained in a confined circle, and the oppressors in a white square that looks like a fortress that overlaps with the corrupt, and the insane. The duality is affected through a consistent polarity between the characters who represent the ideals of honesty, commitment and purity and those who deliberately transgress such values.

The first category of characters in *Le fleuve détourné* is made up of individuals whose rights as citizens have not only been abused by the state, but completely eroded. They feel betrayed by the government and there is no prospect for them. First there is the unnamed main character, whose anonymity stands as a metaphor of the marginalized freedom fighters and particularly conjures up an image of Algerian peasants, dispossessed of their family tribal lands in Algeria's most fertile valleys and forced to eke out an existence on much less productive earth. The man faces the world in which he understands nothing; he waits for an answer with no tomorrow and

his despair is echoed in the words of another out of touch old man, the wise man, met by the main character near his native Douar. He is himself a potential witness to the gradual disintegration of his society (P.143). The incantatory but stifled cry of Ali demonstrates how independence which rekindled hopes of asserting human value has been diverted by an inescapable power leaving people in distress.

The main character's despair is shared by his family members. His wife Houria pours out her problems to her husband and tells him how she has become a prostitute at the mercy of the town notables while her son falls into debauchery for survival. The son of the protagonist-narrator sinks into depravity and corruption. He is the most victimized character because he is deprived and mutilated by the milieu in which he grows up. He is haunted by a sad childhood, lack of affection, painful adolescence, and a social marginalization. In one word, he symbolizes a lost young generation and the meeting of two characters only reinforces the aspect of society without a future. Mimouni uses the man's son as a discursive tool to examine the inadequacies of the educational system and persistent illiteracy which continued to plague 1980s Algeria. After having assisted at a dysfunctional school, he wanders in the streets and stands as one of the thousands of aimless young men, very often called "the Hitists" who have no prospects of employment and no hope of a good life. He and his generation are the very people who have been betrayed. His parents end up in trouble, he is betrayed by everybody, and he is unable to feel at ease. The writer uses the man's son for an implied criticism against the official authorities which always held out education as bait. The young man is unable to make headway because the reality is that school leavers have no opportunity to find employment. Mimouni also uses the man's son to display the gap which separates the Algerian society into two categories, a minority of well off and a majority of poor. The man's son stands for all the young men who were often called "illiterate in two languages" because they are unable to find jobs and they are stuck in the overcrowded slums ringing big cities often sleeping six or more in one room. They have the habit of lounging around with nothing to do, nowhere to go, no money to spend, and no entertainment. They stand in streets wandering and trying by all means to earn a living (P.210). Besides the unnamed protagonist and his family, Mimouni's novel is populated by individuals who cannot erase the horrors of their lives. The main character meets a series of pathetic characters that reproduce in their conversations, the dialectic oppressor and its victim. Few images of peace, beauty and harmony populate the worlds of these characters and all of them are only brief interludes of order. Implicit in their behavior are all the conventions of the monstrous. The nightmare world, perversion, with satanic humor they wear their deficiencies of spirit as scars and as emblems of a world without order, meaning, or sense of continuity. In an attempt to transcend their painful condition, to rise above that which has alienated them, they invariably slide down into hell because they remain obsessed by their weaknesses, evil and suffering. The character named Vingt Cinq believes that he has finished living. Therefore, he remains aloof and out of reach. The Writer lives completely disconnected and flawed. His drug addicted and alcoholic companion, Rachid le Sahraoui suffers from the same feeling of loss and despair. After a last look at his dead friend, Omar, Rachid begins walking toward the fence to an unknown destination.

The Writer, is silent, voiceless, impotent and sterile; he is locked into himself and walled off from the entire world by an impenetrable boundary and is isolated from the other detainees. He stands for the Algerian intellectual who is free but muzzled. He fails to engage in any struggle and believes in nothing other than his self-mutilation and confession of his wastefulness (P.182). When forced to reply to the various charges of Omar, the Writer explains in a long monologue what forces him to keep silent. The Writer's childhood memories are so distressing that he permanently tries to convince himself that they have not occurred because they could not have occurred since it was after all a nightmare to which there is no exit and no escape other than drinking alcohol and smoking drug (P.185). The Writer's conscience is haunted by more than one sin; he speaks of the anger and frustration of his young manhood and of the violence of his acts. He is torn by remorse about the rape of his adoptive sister and condemns himself and describes his impotence and sterility to Omar. Consequently, he rejects all kinds of emotions and prefers his silence (P.186). Worst of all, the Writer is considered guilty and

irresponsible by Omar. Politically, he is found guilty of not changing things for the better in teaching the history of his country because as a writer, he has access to speech, he has a voice, and he can write, he has an audience and therefore is seen as a potential agent that can alter things (P.183). The Writer does not care if he possesses a worldview that automatically has a place in the progressive movement and he fails to believe in a bright future that is deemed too perfect by the official authorities. He also fails to feel within himself any strength or any necessity to participate in nation building for the benefit of future generations. The Writer is simply limited; he locks himself away and condemns himself because his call for commitment and courage has turned against him. Therefore, he becomes an outcast, an exiled in his own country, subject to harassment, both potential and imaginary. Not surprisingly, few images of peace, beauty and harmony populate his world. Implicit in his behavior are all the conventions of despair. The nightmare world, perversion, the satanic humor he wears his spiritual deficiencies of spirit as scars, as emblems of a world without order, meaning, or sense of continuity.

The other character who is destroyed by his ruthless social environment is Omar, the resigned student and artist. After a long agony, he commits suicide and thus leaving the scene furtively. Omar stands against the corrupt leaders. He is intelligent enough to appreciate what is wrong; he stands for progressive and politically committed students who are repulsed by any kind of military dictatorship and state repression (P.184). Omar stands as a virtuous character, a nonconformist intellectual who is deeply repulsed at the sight of the social and political degradation surrounding him. He also perpetually probes his society's shortcomings and desperately questioning his position in the community (P.182). For instance, in a long commentary on the corrupt practices of the members of the government, Omar indicts the ruling class who do not understand the concept of the responsive and accountable state which does not accept the need to act as the people's representative. Instead, they see their positions as a means of engaging in petty tribal and sectional wrangling, using words as a replacement for action, intimidating political opponents, enriching themselves and perpetuating their grip on power (P.183). At the end of the story, after he fails to achieve his moral peacefulness and lessen his physical suffering, he dies under mysterious circumstances. Without taking into account the version of the nurse, the Sioux confirms that the student's death is due to typhoid fever. Omar's suspicious death incorporates the ugly and the bizarre, the diseased and the horrific processes of decay that function as an avenue for social critique. Omar's death can be a necessary political elimination as he cannot be domesticated, tamed, or converted in a social environment in which there is no place for a nonconformist to the state ideology. The dissent and oppositional nature of Omar is closely indebted to a model of "engagement" that represents change for the better.

Against the man and his wretched friends stand the Administrator, his Chief, the Sioux, the Messie and their cohorts. They are bureaucrats, who are getting rich by exploiting their elevated positions. In comparison to the first category of characters, the difference when applied to the latter amounts to an absurdity and disgust. The characters of the second category are representative of an institution: the administration and its agents. The Administrator is painted as arrogant, unconcerned with others' welfare, and ineffective in combating ignorance and poverty. The opening scene of the novel shows that, most African leaders on whom the Administrator is patterned love grandiloquent discourses (P.9). He convinces people that power is monolithic and brooks no opposition. His contradictory stance reflected in the first lines of the novel and his language is in a way a reflection of his misrule when he pretends that the evil comes as much from external influences and indicts suspicious foreign interference and hidden attacks (P.51). His discourse is replete with deceit and tergiversation. Thus, he finds a common interest in ridiculing and intimidating the population to render it silent (P.126). The Administrator is shaped as a caricature of known African despots who are committed to bizarre political postures and rely on power acquired and sustained solely through violent coercion. He exposes the character's violent intolerance of opposition and his urge to perpetuate himself in power. Concretely, the Administrator's words remain mere powerful statements of outrage and betrayal of popular aspirations. The character is further ridiculed by his inability to use terminology correctly, as when he shows signs of limited education and

ignorance of the fundamental workings of the political process. The Administrator's stupidity is also underlined when he engages in emasculation project. Several prisoners are brought before him for providing the reasons that motivates him and his administration to undertake the project thereby providing a further case of counter discursive ridicule. Emasculation comes to signify the removal of the possibility of exercising power (p. 6).

The Administrator's authoritarian state power is reinforced by the support he gets from many repressive and opportunistic military secret agents, named after certain American native Indians, the Sioux. In the novel, they are loyalist repressive thugs who are more than ready to beat up those who do not fall into the ideological line established by the Administrator and his Chief. They are the ears and eyes of the state power and their job is to inform their superiors about every detail of the events happening (P.14). They also cover for all their superior's wrongdoings and lack of responsibilities. The overriding image we have of these Sioux is that of mere pawns in the wider and complex manipulations of power. They, for instance, affirm that Omar's death is due to a typhoid fever and his refusal to get the vaccines, but in reality, it is more probably a political elimination (P.213). Mimouni uses a hilarious and bloody satire to berate the extremities of "personalised" rule as presented by megalomania leaders. He also describes their greed in collecting money to spend in food and parties (P.76.) He degrades also the representatives of the rich class, which he considers both oppressive and ridiculous to shock the audience and stir its consciousness (p. 197).

The third building block of these political leaders is a system of payoffs, rewards to maintain support, as jobs in the bureaucracy may be available to loyalists and relatives of those in power. Fortunes can be made as the regime allows a share of "rents" to go into the pockets of supporters and collaborators. Mimouni reflects on this fraudulent practice through the character called Messie, a rich businessman among many others who lives a luxurious and lavish life on the back of others. The word 'Messiah' means the man of God, a saint and an honest person, but in Mimouni's third novel, he is reversed to a man of the deviousness, an indicator aware of everything that happens. He is involved in networks of prohibited practices and works illegally with the benediction of the official authorities that take their part of the share. By admitting a participation of the spoil, he makes his friends other parasites, for whom there are many ways of circulating money (P.151). Fraudulent situations, for instance, appear with the Messie who uses a great deal of tact and diplomacy to accumulate and enlarge his wealth. His behaviour and actions stand for all the many unscrupulous business men who are involved in illegal money making. The Messie and his partners stand for those who stay out of ruling party politics but seek to mobilize other networks and lines of patronage. They often look to use bribery themselves to gain access to the heart of the corrupt system that allows them to pursue their expectations of personal advancement and to enjoy extravagant lives (P.148). Whatsoever the price, bribery enables them to fulfil their own material desires. To maintain his high rank power in the society, the Messie offers bribes and presents for favours from behind high officials (P.149). He also negotiates and sides with the other bosses and bureaucrats on the back of people to accumulate illegal fortunes (P.150). He creates illegal jobs and exploits poor people while he lures them that he defends their interests (P.151).

The other character who is the epitome of treachery and corruption is the selfish and deceitful character, Si Mokhtar who uses corrupt and dishonest tactics to keep his high social rank. The faithful religious man looks rounded and resplendent from outside but is hollow and rotten within. Mimouni uses caustic satire on Si Hadj Mokhtar who manipulates people into using religion as a base for his hidden nefarious deeds. He is a wicked soul who pretends to be a good Samaritan. He lives in a beautiful and well guarded villa on the top of a hill, surrounded by a vast green garden with many varieties of fruit trees all around it. Si Mokhtar makes people believe that he is a generous saint coming back from the Holy Land. He slaughters sheep, organises a feast for his V.I.P guests who come in large black cars (P.88). But behind the scene, however, the holy man is corrupt to the core because he is involved implicitly in livestock smuggling. He does not feel ashamed but continues to gain money illegally through this traffic. While Hadj Si Mokhtar is supposed to symbolise chastity, honesty and truth, concretely, he cheats and lies (P.89). To get rid of his incumbent nephew, Si Mokhtar sends the latter to

carry out a mysterious job by night. Innocently, the man thanks his uncle and goes to gain his living but shortly afterwards he is nearly arrested by the frontier police for smuggling livestock to the frontier. Si Mokhtar conceals his corruption, treachery and vices behind a façade, called religion, when he tries to bypass and deflect his nephew's main interest in urging him to fulfil his prayer (P.100). The anonymous main character gets into trouble all the time while Si Mokhtar who is an unscrupulous hypocrite, repeatedly secures the moral high ground. Through the tones of the author, sardonically pointing to the gap between the moralistic discourse and the malevolent intentions it serves are the instruments of an authorial discourse about false virtue. The discourse, in my point of view, is theatrical and is close to a farce.

In sum, the Administrator, Si Mokhtar, Fly Tox, and the Messie stand for the history of Algeria distorted by privileged men whose main concern is wealth accumulation by any means. In some passages, by using these characters, Mimouni captures with precision some hidden practices and fraudulent acts such as black market where imported products are sold exorbitantly and financial impropriety that spelled doom for Algerians. The author also shows that drug smuggling, money laundering and all sorts of frauds have made Algeria synonymous with the illicit and black market. Yet, the foregoing instances are only few examples of the several situations in which the author suggests that politicians and their relations are corrupt and sloppy, as well as reckless in perpetuating their lavish lifestyles and high ranked positions. Some officials even couple their corrupt practices with sheer intolerance of political opposition as is displayed by the police behaviour towards the main character, the man (P.73). It can be argued that payoff, patronage and corruption are present in all political systems, but the special feature of the Algerian regime is that there is no check on this practice. There is no accountability, no transparency. The public has no voice in these matters and no way of really knowing what is being done in its name. People are supposed to keep their mouths shut as long as they are gaining some benefits such as good salaries which are used, according to Vingt Cinq, one of Mimouni's characters, to silence people and divert them from the real problems. (P.38).

The analysis of Mimouni's *Le fleuve détourné* suggests that the above considerations have brought to the fore the following conclusions: first, the novel demonstrates its author's ability to use the trickster strategies and other covert tools of resistance in order to justify the liberation of Africans from their oppressive political leaders. The writers' struggle is undertaken under the auspices of Trickster Tradition which the spirit of individual and collective resistance against tyrannical authority is pervasive. By reference to the influence of African discursive strategies such as those of the trickster in folktales combined with Miller's notion of disgust, we have interpreted the ideologies and actions of characters in relation to the author's rejection of neo-colonialism and power relations. As effective tools, discursive and rhetoric devices foreground the writers' concern with issues of injustice, the struggle for liberation from repression, and the way to grapple with issue of authoritarianism. Each character in the novel embodies a discourse; the plot is designed to allow each discourse to compete against other discourses, as a means of teasing out the flaws and challenging the ideologies which staked a claim to Algeria, Africa, and the world in general. Mimouni takes a transgressive approach to the problem of corruption by using every opportunity to explode the myth that the state created under the auspices of the FLN, and in accordance with its revolutionary socialist agenda, has worked for the benefit of ordinary citizens. The demystification is displayed in the text that acts out in its seemingly chaotic organisation and verbal sequences the spinning out of control of the chaos of Algeria. The plethora of images detailing the deterioration of the Algerian infrastructure and rotten landscape that assault the senses accentuate the depth of the moral decay.

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